DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 634 CS 501 577

AUTHOR Ranly, Donald P.
TITLE NCCB (National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting)--A Media Challenger.
INSTITUTION Freedom of Information Foundation, Columbia, Mo.
REPORT NO FIC-362
PUB DATE Nov 76
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Industry; *Broadcast Television; *Citizen Participation; *Commercial Television; Mass Media; Programing (Broadcast); *Public Television; *Television

ABSTRACT

This report traces the development of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB) in its attempts to make broadcasting better serve the public interest. The committee first became active in 1967, when President Johnson's proposals and recommendations for funding the Corporation for Public Broadcasting were meeting resistance in the Congress. The activities of NCCB under Chairman Thomas P. Hoving are described. In 1968 Hoving charged that the commercial television networks and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company were in collusion to dominate technical facilities for the coast-to-coast relay of video "trivia." As a result of Hoving's attacks on commercial broadcasters, several members of the committee and of the board of trustees resigned. In 1970 Hoving resigned and, amidst much controversy, the NCCB began to reorganize. In 1974 Nicholas Johnson became chairman and chief executive officer of the organization. At this time, the NCCB began to publish a magazine entitled "access" in an attempt to encourage a sense of common purpose to those involved in the citizens media-reform movement. (LL)

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NOVEMBER, 1976

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER REPORT NO. 362

NCCB-A MEDIA CHALLENGER

This report was written by Donald P. Ranly, Associate Professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, as part of his doctoral dissertation, The Challengers: Social Pressures on the Press 1965-1975.

The Beginnings: The National Citizens Commission for Public Television

It was in 1951 that the FCC set aside the first 242 television channels for noncommercial broadcasting. The first educational television station went on the air in May, 1953, and in 1962 the federal government first funded television by passage of the ETV Facilities Act.[1]

But those who were dissatisfied with commercial television wanted the government to do more for noncommercial television. In 1965, under the leadership of Dr. James Killian, Jr., and with a charge from the Carnegie Corporation and with the encouragement of President Lyndon Johnson, a commission of private citizens produced a study of noncommercial television entitled, "Public Television: A Program for Action."

Acting upon the recommendations of the Carnegie Commission, President Johnson, in his message on education and health in America on February 28, 1967, recommended that Congress enact the Public Television Act of 1967 to,

> —Increase federal funds for television and radio facility construction to $10.5 million in fiscal 1968, more than three times this year's appropriations.
> —Create a Corporation for Public Television authorized to provide support to noncommercial television and radio.
> —Provide $9 million in fiscal 1968 as initial funding for the Corporation.

The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 became law,[2] and was incorporated into the 1934 Communications Act.

According to Jack Gould (New York *Times*, 2-22-70), once the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television had completed its report, Alan Pifer, president of the Carnegie Corporation, "felt at least a moral obligation to mobilize public sentiment in favor of the report's conclusions." Pifer envisioned a grass-roots campaign to win citizen interest. The result was the National Citizens Committee for Public Television, and a September 18, 1967, press release said its purpose was "to gain popular support for a strong and independent system of Public Television in the United States."

The chairman of the committee was Thomas P. Hoving, the former director of the New York City parks, and at that time, the director of the Metropolitan Museum. Other members of the committee were Ralph Ellison, author, New York City; Devereux C. Josephs, chairman of the board of WNDT, New York City; Ralph Lowell, chairman, Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company and president, WGBH Educational Foundation; and Newton N. Minow, Chicago attorney and former chairman of the FCC.

In addtion, 47 listed members served to represent the arts, education and educational broadcasting, labor unions, etc. Another 50 were to be added to the committee soon. Listed backers of the committee were: The Danforth Foundation; W. K. Kellogg Foundation; The Ford Foundation; Twentieth Century Fund, Inc.; Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.[3] According to *Television Digest*, the annual budget was set at $235,000.[4] It had a paid staff of eight, headed by Executive Director Ben Kubasik, who had left CBS News to join Fred Friendly at the Ford Foundation.

As President Johnson's proposals and recommendations for funding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting began to cause stormy debate in the Congress, the National Citizens Committee for Public Television began to raise its voice. From the beginning, however, many wondered whether that voice was truly representative of the committee, or whether it represented merely the views of its chairman, Thomas Hoving. Long before his involvement with the Committee, many considered the 36-year-old Hoving a "headline grabber." *Television Digest* reported on October 16, 1967,

> Hoving is relating to TV what he learned while N.Y. Comr. of Parks (where he ruffled feathers, made headlines in successful efforts (such as go-go dancers), to make parks safe, get people to use them) and now as dir. of N.Y. Metropolitan Museum (job for which many considered him too much of a "swinger"; he rides around N.Y. on a

Summary:

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motorcycle). Life, business, museums, parks and TV—all have common problem, getting people to communicate, he says.[5]

The Controversy Begins

Hoving did get some headlines in mid-September, 1967, when he accused commercial broadcasters "of largely ignoring their responsibilities" to the public while making huge profits. But that wasn't what upset the broadcasters. Hoving suggested that stations should pay "a substantial levy or license fee" to support ETV. (It must be pointed out that two amendments had been introduced in the House of Representatives calling for taxes or license fees on TV-radio stations to support ETV.) Hoving also announced that his committee planned an immediate study "to find out what is required for combined public and private long-term financing to insure that public TV in this country will be sound, healthy and productive."[6] Hoving said the survey would also show how corporations might contribute a proper percentage of their advertising outlay to public television. "These advertisers put more than $2 billion annually into commercial TV alone and, because of how brilliantly commercial TV sells their products, earn many more billions without even a hint of TV public service or public awareness."[7]

The following month, Hoving was less critical of commercial TV. He said commercial broadcasters would be thankful for a government-supported public system because it would interest many more people in television. "Public TV will show commercial TV that there's an audience for more, for the better things."[8] *Television Digest* reported that his charge of the previous month that three commercial television networks were "largely ignoring their responsibilities" had caused "great discomfort" within his Citizens Committee and was at least partly responsible for a special meeting of the board of trustees the week before at which only three of the 12 members were present. Hoving said, "We undoubtedly will goof again," but not by criticizing commercial TV. He retracted his earlier statement, saying, "It was too emphatic. Politically and diplomatically it was not wise." Most stations do recognize their responsibilities to the public and try to meet them, and "It must be understood that public TV must do what commercial TV cannot do enough of."[9]

Hoving said the purposes of his committee were "kinda vague in the beginning," that it was started by "people who were activists; they wanted to become involved." Now the clear goal was to get people involved in public TV—and indirectly in commercial TV.[10]

But early in 1968, executive director Ben Kubasik announced the committee would have its first meeting for the full membership on February 11-12 in New Orleans to produce a "white paper" that would "create shockwaves."[11] Kubasik predicted that two-thirds of the 119-member committee would attend. Kubasik and Hoving indicated that they and other members "were tiring of the waiting game for public television" and were determined to "spur some action."

Television Digest reported that 60 members showed up, but that those who expected the meeting to become a diatribe against commercial broadcasting were disappointed. The theme was, "How can we best cooperate with them and get them to cooperate with us?" Even the "white paper," which was to be critical of the President's delay in pushing public TV, was rejected. The committee did adopt a resolution urging Congress to reject President Johnson's budget recommendations, and instead to appropriate $9 million already authorized for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The committee also said it would produce a series of spots boosting public TV with the hope that they would be shown on commercial stations. The debate on how public broadcasting was to be financed led to no clear recommendations.

The only commercial broadcaster present, Westinghouse Broadcasting Vice President Herbert Cahan, said he came away from the meeting "surprisingly pleased" with the way the meetings were conducted. "If the Committee represents any threat to commercial broadcasters, it wasn't evident in New Orleans," he said.[12]

In July of 1968, the committee, still calling itself the National Citizens Committee for Public Television, published a "Report to the American People—The State of Public Broadcasting." The report listed six major goals:

> —To point out the potential Public Broadcasting has for serving this nation.
> —To request that the full authorization for the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 be appropriated immediately.
> —To affirm that the money levels for Public Broadcasting be raised quickly to those recommended by the Carnegie Commission.
> —To press for maximum professional competence and technical capability for existing and new Public Broadcasting stations so that they may compete for audiences.
> —To work toward a definitive plan for Public Broadcasting's long-range financing which can include a combination of proposals already made and still to come; stressing that whatever federal monies be given Public Broadcasting, be free of annual appropriation review.
> —To call for the fullest possible means of advertising and promotion for Public Broadcasting so that what it has to offer may become more widely watched and supported.

On The Attack

On September 29, 1968, Chairman Hoving charged (New York *Times*, 9-30-68) that the commercial television networks and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company were "in collusion" to dominate technical facilities for the coast-to-coast relay of video "trivia." This "trivia," said Hoving, took the place of what should have been programs of serious substance in an election year. Concerning the business relations between AT&T and the commercial networks, Hoving said (New York *Times*, 9-30-68),

> These two giants, with a corner on what can be shown on television nationally, keep our electoral process muted and prevent our people from being fully informed while the country cries out for solutions to the chaos and divisions it faces.

Hoving charged that the industry's effort to suspend Section 315 of the Communications Act for the coming elections was "an artificial issue and a stalling tactic that lets (networks) off the hook of realizing their responsibility to the public on, what are, after all, the public's air-

waves from which they profit so heavily . . . It's not the candidates about whom they should be solicitous, it is the public."[13] Section 315 requires that a broadcaster provide equal time to the opponents of a candidate who has used his facilities for political purposes. Hoving praised NET's offer of time to presidential candidates without the suspension of Section 315 and said the networks should do the same.

Hoving also cited Section 396(h) of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 which says,

> Nothing in the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, or in any other provision of law shall be construed to prevent United States communications common carriers from rendering free or reduced rate communications interconnection services for noncommercial educational television or radio services, subject to such rules and regulations as the Federal Communications Commission may prescribe.

As reported in The New York *Times*, (9-30-68), Hoving said the section meant noncommercial TV was "entitled by law" to such a service but that AT&T was lax in not providing a live network hook-up from 3 p.m. until 1 or 2 a.m.

AT&T had been negotiating with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and with National Educational Television. Richard W. Miller, assistant vice president of AT&T, had told the FCC previously that if the Commission decided noncommercial TV should enjoy free network service, there would still remain the question of who picked up the bill for construction and maintenance of the service.

Hoving also said that the National Citizens Committee for Public Television felt an obligation only to viewers and that the board of trustees of the committee had given him a mandate to act as an aggressive critic of television's programs and policies. "We will pat it on the back, we'll slap it on the wrists, and we'll jab in the knife," Hoving said.

But apparently the board of trustees was far from unanimous in its approval of Hoving's approach and words. Only seven of the 12 trustees were present, and one of those, Devereux C. Josephs, chairman of the noncommercial Channel 13 and former chairman of the New York Life Insurance Company, said he disagreed and would take no further active role in the group's affairs. Newton N. Minow said he had not attended a meeting since February and now planned to resign as a committee trustee. He also said that AT&T and CBS were among his clients.

Another member of the committee, Robert L. Coe, a former vice president for ABC television, reflected later on Hoving's remarks: "Perhaps it was simply the spirit of the times, or the unrest on some university campuses. Perhaps the presidential campaign was not proceeding according to Mr. Hoving's fancy, or unidentified influences were at work within the committee headquarters."[14] Coe and others expressed dismay that they had no idea that Hoving was going to say what he said, especially in the name of the committee.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which Hoving and associates were organized to support, through its chairman, Frank Pace, Jr., said that it had no relation to the citizens committee and wished to disassociate itself clearly from Hoving's remarks. Pace said that AT&T was negotiating in good faith to give public broadcasting a regular network service and that AT&T enjoyed sympathetic support from the commercial chains.

The board of directors of National Educational Television voiced "shock" over Hoving's remarks. John F. White, NET president, said (New York *Times*, 9-30-68) that both short-term and long-range negotiations with AT&T were promising and that the allegations of collusion were "simply not true."

Regarding the "collusion" charges, CBS Inc. President Frank Stanton wrote to Hoving specifically about giving time to all the candidates. Except for the limited extent that networks could use newsfilm of candidates on broadcasts exempt from equal-time provisions, Dr. Stanton said, "Every lawyer I have consulted states that the present law would require us to give equal time to all other qualified candidates—more than a dozen—if we were to adopt your suggestion."[15]

Later in the week, Hoving replied by suggesting that all presidential candidates should be given time since there were only six of them. Certainly the reasons for not presenting the candidates should not be because of what it would cost the networks, their owned stations and their affiliates in preempted time.

AT&T also defended its position with the statement that

> we share the public interest in educational television and radio . . . we have outlined two possibilities for greatly reduced rates for ETV . . . based on using facilities at times when they would not otherwise be required and at prices which cover the additional broadcasts without imposing a burden on other users of communications. There is no such thing as "free service." The cost must be borne by someone.[16]

But before Hoving had received the Stanton letter or AT&T had replied, he was again on the offensive. He said that a Washington lawyer was going to be hired by the group and that the board of trustees was going to be expanded with "young blood unbeholden to government, industry or educational TV."

Jack Gould reported that what seemed to be in the making was the kind of commission repeatedly suggested many years previously by William Benton, chairman of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. Benton had said that broadcasting needed a continuing study in areas that the FCC was prevented by law from entering or from which Congress shied away. Gould said that the hiring of a lawyer in Washington was seen as a first step toward participation and hearings before both Congress and the FCC. This could become an effective challenge to the lobby of the National Association of Broadcasters.

The Commission Gets a New Name

On October 21, 1968, committee headquarters issued a release saying that National Citizens Committee for Public Television had more than doubled the size of its board of trustees and had established a 10-member executive committee to meet monthly in New York. More significantly, perhaps, it had also changed its name to the

National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting and said it intended to concern itself with "upgrading all of broadcasting," by conducting studies, making public statements, issuing publications, lobbying and proposing legislation, not only to benefit noncommercial broadcasting, but to "improve" commercial broadcasting as well.[17]

The enlarging of the committee and the changes announced by Hoving caused other members to resign. Ralph Langley and Howard Cox, respectively the chairman and vice chairman of KLRN-TV, the education station in Austin-San Antonio, said they did not want to be associated with Hoving's "headline hunting attacks on commercial broadcasters."[18]

In November, committee headquarters announced the opening of a Washington office and the appointment of Robert Squier, director of television for the Democratic National Committee during the 1968 presidential campaign, as consultant. The announcement said, "Bob Squier's broad knowledge of both broadcasting and the political scene makes him an ideal liaison for the Committee in its expanded operations in the areas of broadcast policies and practices."[19]

In early November, Hoving asked commercial broadcasters to report to him the amount of money and equipment they had donated to educational television. *Broadcasting* magazine editorialized that the request of NCCB, which, said the editorial, "is really a misnomer for an organization that is neither 'national' nor 'for' broadcasting," seemed reasonable on the surface, since many commercial broadcasters had contributed time, money, staff and hardware to ETV. "But Mr. Hoving's recent record invites no cooperation in any enterprise he cooks up." Whatever information Hoving gained, said the editorial, would be used to criticize the broadcasting system. Any man who said the networks and AT&T were conspiring to debase television programing was not to be trusted to use facts with any care. "The place for Mr. Hoving's questionnaire on contributions to educational television is the wastebasket."[20]

The NCCB at the St. Regis

In early January, NCCB met at the St. Regis Hotel in New York City, and as Louise Sweeney, television critic of The *Christian Science Monitor*, wrote (1-11-69), "The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting has thrown down the gauntlet. It remains to be seen whether the commercial networks and the Federal Communications Commission will pick it up."

At a news conference, Hoving said (*Christian Science Monitor*, 1-11-69) the committee

> categorically calls for a stop to the broadcast-government liaison that in the name of free enterprise has exploited audiences—our nation's people—and enriched a relative handful of their peers in direct proportion to how little they serve the public interest.

The committee said it had purchased a minimal amount of stock (three shares each) in ABC, CBS and RCA (NBC's parent organization). The committee's purpose was to "exercise whatever voting, proxy, and resolution rights (are) available to the committee in widening discussion over those corporations' programing and profits."

But the real purpose of the press conference was to announce the launching of a five-year, $5 million funding campaign to enable the committee to carry out its other plans.[21]

Among the other plans were,

> —A meeting with the FCC in Washington March 12. Hoving said the committee wanted to find out "from those public servants themselves" why and how it was that stations receive rubber-stamp renewals when many of them should be ineligible for renewal, "except and unless the letter of the law is intolerably stretched."
>
> —The prepartion of a study by Dr. Dick Netzer, head of the economics department of New York University, on long-range financing for public broadcasting.
>
> —The preparation of a position paper on cable television; should the FCC regulate cable TV and is the FCC capable of regulating it properly?
>
> —The preparation of a report on network broadcasting's coverage of the presidential campaign. This study of "woefully inadequate informational coverage of both the issues and the candidates" would be released publicly and sent to "appropriate congressional committees."

In addition to Hoving, other committee members' voices were heard at the St. Regis meeting.

Actor Robert Montgomery, who as *Broadcasting* magazine editorialized, "grew bitter but not broke in commercial television,"[22] proposed a 3.5 percent tax on commercial broadcasting's sale of time and programing to support public television.

Marya Mannes, called by Jack Gould (New York *Times*, 1-19-69) "the charmingly tough TV critic," cited a great need for better television criticism. She proposed that newspapers carry every day a compilation of all acts of violence on the home screen within the publication's area.

Dr. Charles A. Siepmann, professor emeritus of New York University (the same Siepmann, *Broadcasting* magazine reminded its readers, who was the principal architect of the FCC's "Blue Book" on programing in the mid 40s), advanced a five-point program for balanced TV that would, according to Jack Gould (New York *Times*, 1-19-69), practically rewrite the Communications Act of 1934 "without any firm assurance that it could be practically administered." Siepmann said public interest was the "essence of broadcasting," and that the commercial broadcasters' definition of public interest was "essentially silly."[23]

The NCCB press conference did not escape criticism. Already at the conference, Roy Danish, director of the Television Information Office, which Hoving had characterized as "one of the broadcasting industry's chief propaganda arms," said, "Mr. Hoving's notion that the FCC works in secret and mysterious ways to give unfair support to the television industry is sheer nonsense."[24]

Broadcasting magazine editorialized about the "ambitious, not to say audacious, plans of Thomas P. F. Hoving" and the NCCB:

> The committee's incurable flaw, it seems to us,

> is not that it is out to take on the world and reshape it to the committee's design—idealistic, and impertinent, as that goal is. The trouble is that it is the wrong group of people trying to speak for people it cannot possibly represent and who don't want to be spoken for, anyway.[25]

The editorial said that the 25-man board of trustees was made up of intelligent, and for the most part, eminent people. They were able to attract a host of their peers and "no doubt a host of professional do-gooders." But they could not conceivably represent the people. Possibly they could represent the top 10 per cent, the editorial said.

Jack Gould wrote (New York *Times*, 1-19-69) that the homework of the NCCB had not been impressive or reassuring. Although he agreed that a viewers' watchdog could be extremely valuable, he said he was worried that Hoving and friends were trying to do too many things at once. So far there had been far more promise than performance, the very charge the NCCB kept making against the broadcasters. The committee had to realize that it was up against "some of the canniest professionals in government and industry." What was required was "maximum adroitness, skill and pragmatic savvy."

Near Death

And then NCCB ran out of money. According to Coe, "The original funding organizations apparently wanted nothing further to do with the NCCB."[26] Executive director Ben Kubasik notified members on February 19, 1969, that lack of funds might force the organization to disband "toward the end of March."[27] Several working members were released, including consultant Robert Squier in Washington and associate director Eugene Gardner in New York. Arrangements were also being made to sublet the office space.

According to Coe, about a week later the committee, "or rather the trustees acting in the name of the committee," filed a complaint against the New York *Daily News* ownership of WPIX-TV and The New York *Times* ownership of WQXR-AM and WQXR-FM.

Coe speculated: "Perhaps it was this activity on the part of the committee that won it some badly needed financial support."[28] A memorandum to the committee members dated June 3, 1969, said,

> In addition to Charles Benton's generous $100,000 grant from the Benton Foundation for this year (and another $100,000 next year), I can now mention some additional $37,000 either in or pledged from various areas, including committee members.[29]

Later in June, The New York *Times* reported (6-27-69) that Benton's contributions contained the proviso that the committee commit itself to a program of active fund-raising and to a serious attempt at solidifying its base as an effective lobbying force. NCCB then hired a professional fund-raiser, Harold Oram, whose previous clients included the Planned Parenthood Association and the Scenic Hudson Committee.

Meanwhile, the NCCB apparently continued its efforts at challenging various stations' licenses. Hoving had indicated that the challenging process had to be very selective since "the cost of legally challenging even one station is phenomenal."[30] To cut down these costs, NCCB asked the FCC to adopt a rule requiring broadcast stations to keep and make available to the public a record of all programing dealing with controversial issues.[31] Stations would keep audio portions of all programs broadcast except those in entertainment or sports. The records could be kept in written, tape, disc or other permanent form, and would be retained until 90 days after license renewal unless the license grant is challenged. In that case, records would be preserved until the proceeding or complaint was resolved.

NCCB said the proposed rule would "put broadcasting on a parity with the print media, which customarily maintain public files of back issues for research and criticism." The records would assure compliance with the fairness doctrine and with the First Amendment.

All logs and records would be available to the public at the station's main studios or at some designated place of public file. If demands upon a licensee were too great, it could apply to the FCC for a protective order. Network affiliated stations could designate one station as the "station of record." Syndicators could maintain a single record of programs seen by more than one licensee.

On programs viewed by the licensee as involving "controversial issues of public importance," NCCB proposed a listing of the subjects discussed and the names of persons whose views were expressed. The identity of callers on call-in programs would also be recorded to inhibit the "anonymous slander which occurs on some of these programs."

The principal aim of the proposal was to aid groups challenging broadcast license renewal. NCCB said the challenge of WLBT-TV in Jackson, Mississippi, took over five years and cost $100,000.[32]

Apparently neither the FCC nor the broadcasters took the NCCB proposal seriously because little was heard or done about it. In October, the NCCB was again heard from at the Senate Commerce Committee hearings regarding the appointments of Dean Burch and Robert Wells to the FCC. NCCB spokesman William B. Branch, a black playwright, said the nominations should be withdrawn or defeated and that at least one black man should be included among the new nominees. NCCB member Rev. Robert F. Drinan, said the public should have as much "veto power" over FCC appointments as does the broadcast industry. Drinan quoted a statement of Robert Wells that "the public interest is not necessarily separable from the welfare of licensees any more than separable from the welfare of retailers." Drinan said that "any man who looks at broadcasting as nothing more than just another business to be conducted like any other business has no right to serve on the FCC."[33]

Hoving Resigns As Chairman

Then in early February, 1970, Hoving told the board of directors of NCCB that he would resign as chairman in a month, but would remain as a committee member. Hoving said that he was leaving because he would soon rejoin the administration of New York City's Mayor John Lindsay, under whom he had served as parks commissioner. The New York *Times* reported (2-10-70) that he would not be joining the mayor's official family but would be serving on one of the city's governmental task forces.

The *Times* article also referred to a "power struggle between two groups" within the NCCB. One faction, led by the committee's chief fund-raiser, Harold L. Oram, and board member, George Probst (believed to be William Benton's man on the board), wanted the organization to strengthen its prestige with the addition of prominent people. The other faction, comprising several board members and the committee's executive director, Ben Kubasik, wanted the committee to remain what it was, a virtual "citizens' committee," more broadly based and more representative of all classes of people.

Oram was said to be intruding upon policy by soft-pedaling controversy and criticisms so as to make fund-raising easier. There was said to be opposition to a sharp report NCCB had made regarding Vice President Agnew's attack on television news coverage, as well as to the group's criticism of Dean Burch's appointment as chairman of the FCC. The quarrel reportedly intensified when it was suggested that Probst be named president of the committee (the committee had not used the title previously). Some board members apparently preferred Kubasik as president, should such a post be created. Kubasik had also been mentioned as Hoving's successor. Hoving first said he would resign if the committee did not accept the prominent-person policy favored by Oram, but then said he was resigning in a month anyway.

On April 15, 1970, The New York *Times* announced that the "long expected shakeup" of the NCCB had taken place the day before at a meeting of the organization's board. The results would signal a subtle change in direction for the group, since the faction that desired to court only prominent persons for the board had won.

Since Hoving was on the winning side, he decided to stay on as "titular chairman, perhaps due to the persuasion of William Benton, who had saved the board from dissolution the year previously with his gift of $200,000." Robert Montgomery, who had resigned several months previously, returned as vice chairman and acting head of the organization. Montgomery had been serving as the president of the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center.

Earle K. Moore became the secretary and George Probst, the new treasurer. Kubasik was to remain as executive director.

The *Times* said it did not know how long Hoving would remain as titular chairman. He had wished to be only a board member, but his position as "chairman" was important "as a magnet to attract people and money to the organization." The announced expansion program of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, of which he was still director, was expected to take up most of his time and energies.

Other board members who had resigned while this controversy was going on were: Maya Mannes, essayist; Brendan Gill, critic; June Wayne, artist; Mrs. June Degnan, a wealthy West Coast supporter; and Shana Alexander, editor of *McCall's* magazine. Milton Bass, entertainment editor of The Berkshire (Massachusetts) *Eagle*, resigned after the meeting. In mid-summer, Kubasik was fired in a public dispute with Hoving and other trustees.

New Directions

Also, amid all the controversy and reorganizations, nearly all the proposed conferences and meetings with the FCC had been called off or delayed. But finally, on October 26, 1970, a "national conference on citizens (sic) right in broadcasting," sponsored by NCCB, was held at New York's Americana hotel, featuring six panels, three running concurrently in the morning and three in the afternoon.

The New York conference seemed to point in yet another direction or purpose for the committee. When scheduled luncheon speakers had finished, Hoving offered the microphone to unscheduled speakers.

The first to accept Hoving's invitation was William D. Wright, national coordinator for Black Efforts for Soul in Television, who accused the Hoving committee of being guilty of the same charges it had hurled at commercial television. "After two years of existence," Wright said, "the NCCB has failed to live up to its potential. We're intellectualizing to the point where there is no action."

Wright said he wanted the committee actively to support changes in broadcasters' programing practices dealing with minorities, in their employment of members of minority groups, and in minority participation in station ownership. More directly, Wright asked that the committee expand its board to include blacks and other minorities.

After the meeting, Robert Lewis Shayon, who had attended, reflected in the *Saturday Review* that the meeting could have gone differently and served a different purpose had ABC, CBS and NBC accepted the invitation of NCCB to participate. An open-letter advertisement in The New York *Times* had asked the network presidents to attend. Goldenson, Stanton and Sarnoff did not accept, but a number of "observers" from the networks were there.[34] Had the presidents attended, they would have suffered "a barrage of criticism, grievances, even invective from a highly vocal and articulate sample of intellectual and ethnic minorities in the United States, each with its own long list of private and communal expressions of outrage, frustration and unmet needs."

But, said Shayon, the networks did not have to listen to any "seven-day wonders with no real power base, no funds, and no stick-to-it qualities." They used their clout where it counted—in the halls of the FCC or in Congress.

Shayon then said,

> By their refusal to enter the dialogue, the networks may, indeed, have nurtured the chances of the NCCB to develop into a significant challenger. Their attendance would at least have indicated some responsibleness to a national constituency however small. Their absence demonstrated that networks, unlike local stations, are "home free" and utterly without legal responsibility to citizens who presume to speak for important segments of the national spectrum of viewers.

In early December, NCCB mailed to prospective supporters a copy of the reorganization plans of the National Association of Broadcasters as printed in *Broadcasting* magazine on October 12, 1970. The letter quoted from the article and asked if it mattered that the broadcast industry had embarked on a program that

would put it "into fighting trim to counteract the buffeting broadcasters have been receiving from Congress, the FCC, crusading lawyers, cultural and religious leaders and . . . from the public"?

The letter then listed some of the problems the industry was responding to. The NCCB believes, it said, that citizen participation and action, "the responsibility of all citizens to accept their right to the airwaves," is the link between the FCC and the broadcast industry.

The letter also announced that the NCCB would move its national office to Washington after the first of the year.

Also in early December, after the post had been vacant since mid-summer, NCCB appointed Warren Braren as its executive director. Braren had been the manager of the National Association of Broadcasting's New York Code Authority. Shortly after being dismissed from that position, Braren testified before a House cigarette hearing that NAB president Vincent T. Wasilewski had misled Congress and that "the Code is nothing more than an industry defense mechanism designed to cover up selfish interests."[35] In October, 1970, at a television conference in Boston Braren "severely attacked" the NAB and its Television Code." Braren said the networks are forever talking about the need for research but they avoid any commitment of resources to do the research. Said Braren:

> Their orientation is to the marketplace, pure and simple. Truth to them is a business truth—one of economics. It is to this end that one must always return when broadcasters talk about freedom, the First Amendment, the public interest, and their own Radio and Television Codes.

In spite of these statements, Braren reportedly told Hoving and his trustees that he was not "in sympathy" with the anti-TV actions of NCCB. It was understood that Braren was assured the direction of the Committee had changed and "that no longer would wild attacks be made just for the sake of publicity."[36] Braren had been working as a consultant to the United Church of Christ in recent months.

Television Digest also reported that Hoving told the publication that NCCB had merged with Action for Children's Television and that clean-up of children's television would become a major goal of the committee. NCCB did, of course, support ACT in many efforts, but no "merger" ever took place. *Television Digest* also spoke of other priorities in the "redirection" of the activities of NCCB:

1) "Legal, responsible and fairly quiet steps at the FCC, mainly with respect to renewals."
2) Expansion of individual memberships—now listed at 36,000.
3) Revitalized and strengthened local citizens' groups to seek changes at station level.

The report also mentioned the proposed plan to move NCCB to Washington. Fred Ferretti wrote (New York *Times*, 12-16-70) that the change of scenery from New York to Washington, indicated, according to sources within the committee, a gradual lessening of the role of Hoving as committee chairman. But another source denied it, saying that having Braren in Washington doing research would give Hoving "something to bite on."

But of more importance, Ferretti reported that NCCB would be sharing office space, research staffs and common cause with Albert H. Kramer's Citizens Communications Center. Kramer had been in agreement with the general aims of NCCB, but was said to prefer legal petition to public oratory.

A spokesman from NCCB said (New York *Times*, 12-16-70) they were not talking about a merger, nor were they talking about one organization being submerged. "What we are talking about is combining management functions. Both of our budgets are tight. We'll both be helped by our consolidation." The names of both groups would be retained.

The *Times* article also reported that two important names had been added to NCCB's board "over the last few months." The Rev. Everett Parker, director of the Office of Communications for the United Church of Christ, and Mrs. Peggy Charren, then the secretary of Action for Children's Television had been added recently, and Edward P. Morgan, ABC correspondent, was to join soon.

No president had been selected as yet. Kenneth A. Cox, former FCC commissioner, and former *Newsday* publisher Bill Moyers were said to have turned down the job. No president was expected to be named in the near future.

NCCB did indeed move to Washington, but in the following months little was heard from the committee. In March, 1971, after White House director of communications, Herbert G. Klein, had asked for time on the "Dick Cavett Show" to present an administration position on the controversy about the SST project, NCCB filed a request for a ruling on the subject of government pressure on broadcasters. The petition also reflected the view that Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's comments about the broadcast news media was an attempt to "pressure" them, and hence improper since broadcasters operate on a government license.

The FCC rejected the NCCB petition and decided not to hold evidentiary hearings. But it did say that administration spokesmen have the same right as anti-administration spokesmen to participate "fully and vigorously in a democratic process." They may even "pressure" broadcasters into presenting a particular viewpoint, since what the administration has to say may be in the public interest. The FCC said it was concerned only about whether the fairness doctrine was being observed and whether the licensee was deliberately distorting the news.[37]

But the next time the NCCB was making noticeable news it was again "reorganizing." The New York Times Service announced that two of the most prominent figures in the broadcasting field were joining forces as the new heads of NCCB. Nicholas Johnson, who had recently resigned after seven and one half years on the FCC, was becoming chairman of the group, and Albert H. Kramer, founder of the Citizens Commiss[illegible] Center, would become president.

Kramer said the new board of directors would consist of persons "able to make substantive contributions, as opposed to dignitaries." He cited as two examples two members "already named," the Rev. Everett C. Parker, and Attorney Earl K. Moore.

Reorganized—Again

The May 13, 1974, issue of *Broadcasting* magazine began its report of the "resurrected, reconstructed and ready to get involved" NCCB by saying: "Back in the late 1960's, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting seemed to be the establishment's answer to what some in the establishment thought was wrong with television." The report goes on to talk about the controversial Thomas P. F. Hoving and his inclination to rile committee members as much as the broadcast-establishment.

Now the Hoving style was to be gone, but not the feeling that broadcasting is too important to be left to the broadcasters or to the FCC. The thrust now was to get the public involved in the regulatory process and in broadcast-program decision-making.

In addition to Nicholas Johnson, Albert Kramer, Everett Parker, and Earl K. Moore, the board of directors was to include Philip Watson, former manager of Howard University's WHUR-FM, Washington, and Charles Benton, head of Public Media Inc., a Chicago-based educational film distribution company. Mrs. Charren was not among them.

Broadcasting magazine said Benton was largely responsible for NCCB's revival. In adition to his own money pledges (the William Benton Foundation), he was able to exact pledges from the Stern Fund and the J. M. Kaplan Fund. Other contributors helped bring the total to $72,000, enough to pay the rent, the phone bills, some mailings, part-time salaries for Kramer and Johnson, and salaries of two full-time staffers, Chuck Shepherd, a former aide to Nicholas Johnson when he was on the FCC, and Esther Kane, an administrative assistant.

The directions the "new" organization were going to take were not yet altogether clear. Kramer said he had established the existence of more than 500 citizen groups with some kind of media reform program. He did not see NCCB as an "advocacy group," but rather as an aide in supplying information to groups which wanted it or as an organizing or coordinating agency. NCCB would take on special projects, however, like opposing the nomination of members to the FCC who are found unacceptable.

Broadcasting magazine said NCCB would have its image "firmly in mind" perhaps by early fall, and then it would be able to approach the foundations for additional funds.

In the fall, NCCB announced that Nicholas Johnson, who had been defeated in his attempt to run for Congress in Iowa, would be the publisher of a new magazine called *access*, and would be chairman and chief executive officer for NCCB which would publish it. The editor, Chuck Shepherd, said (Des Moines *Register*, 11-23-74) *access* would be a biweekly "specializing in news of importance to media reformers." Judging from what the magazine was to be, NCCB had found its main function:

> We'll cover more than just commercial broadcasting reform. Cable television access groups, the alternative video movement, journalistic reviews, listener-support stations, media education, program production reform—*access* will try to unite them all psychologically because that which affect one element affects all the other elements.

(*More*) magazine reported in January, 1975, that the "new NCCB" would "keep a close eye on the FCC, gather information for local media reform groups seeking greater public access to the hundreds of U.S. commercial television stations, and publicize procedures open to the public for challenging objectionable programing."[38]

The first issue of *-access-* (later changed to *access* without the hyphens) appeared in late 1974 (no date given). The front page editorial which was unsigned began, "This is the first issue of *-access-*, and it may be the only issue for a while." The publishers hoped it would become a biweekly or a monthly when there was a sufficient staff to do the work. The editorial looked for the common theme which united the citizen media reform movement. It identified the movement as comprising

> The community video people, the full-time activists in station negotiation and federal regulation, the cable television people, listener-supported broadcasting, journalism reviews and underground newspapers, public interest law and advertising firms, and—most importantly—those non-media organizations whose views have so far been underrepresented on media.[39]

The bond or theme uniting them was, "All of the diverse groups in this movement have been shut out of the processes by which mass communications messages are created and disseminated." The newsletter was an example of the support services NCCB planned to provide. The title of the newsletter reflected NCCB's feeling about the citizen movement in broadcasting: "that all its elements are involved in securing access to important media processes." NCCB said it hoped to provide information and other support services "to facilitate a flow of useful ideas and information which can serve to connect these disparate bodies which, in our view, are actually working side by side."[40]

In the first regular edition of *access*, dated January 13, 1975, Nicholas Johnson began his regular column called, "I dissent." Johnson elaborated further on the role of NCCB and of *access*. "Access," he wrote "as a concept and as a magazine—is central to the democratic idea. *Access* means the opportunity for all to participate fully in the society."[41]

And central to the concept of access, according to Johnson, is the allocation of power. Power shifts among people because there is a change in the instruments of power. Power can be measured by what one owns, by armies, stock certificates, academic degrees. But,

> What has happened during the past twenty years is that *television* has become the focus of power. The battlefield of the 1960's and 1970's is only 21 inches across. Power today is measured in terms of who owns, controls, censors, programs that small screen, that electrode on the brain of America. For from that power comes all other: political, economic, and intellectual.

Johnson then listed again all the activities included in the concept of access to broadcasting and said part of NCCB's mission was to bring a sense of common purpose to all those involved in those activities and to show how they are all related.

At last it did seem as if NCCB had found a definite mission and the people to go about carrying it out. John-

son had pointed out that every organization, every group effort, every political part, every movement has needed some form of magazine, newspaper, or journal. It was to be the purpose of *access* to serve that function, and for 1975, at least, it attempted to do this on a biweekly basis. Subscription to the magazine cost $24 a year, but if a nonprofit grassroots citizen group could not afford a subscription, *access* said it would be sent free. The magazine was staffed by students on leave from their schools, some of whom received academic credit. NCCB paid the students $50 per week.

In addition to publishing *access*, NCCB involved itself in several projects, as it said it would. It announced that it was conducting a study of the performance of all television stations in Ohio and Michigan and would distribute its report one year in advance of the Ohio and Michigan renewal date. The study was called a pilot project, which, if successful, would lead to studies of all the TV stations in the country as their licenses come up for renewal. The study was to include information such as the amounts of news and public affairs programing at the stations, ownership information, employment practices, responsiveness to community needs, and access to community groups, and was intended for the use of local citizen groups and anybody else interested in the stations examined.[42]

From all indications, as 1975 came to a close, NCCB had not only found what it wanted to do and was going about the task of doing it. A mailing in late 1975 answered the question, "What is NCCB?" in the following manner:

> NCCB is a nonprofit, public-interest, media reform group, organized in 1967, with 16,000 members nationwide. Its goal is to make media responsive to their audiences rather than to governmental, advertising, or corporate dominance. It seeks to achieve that goal by providing technical assistance, information, and other support (except funding) to citizen groups around the country.

Indeed, perhaps the multitude of media reform groups had found a parent—or at least a dependable friend. Perhaps the cry for power, the cry for access coming out of the sixties were at least no longer to be lone voices, lost in the wind.

FOOTNOTES

1. Public Law 87-447.
2. Public Law 90-129.
3. Robert L. Coe, "The National Citizens Committee For Broadcasting: What is It?" *Television Quarterly*, Summer, 1969, p. 49.
4. "Hoving Committee Gets Militant," *Television Digest*, September 30, 1968, p. 4.
5. "Thank Goodness For Public TV," *Television Digest*, October 16, 1967, p. 2.
6. "CPB Survives House Attacks," *Television Digest*, September 25, 1967, p. 2.
7. *bid.*
8. "Thank Goodness For Public TV," p. 1.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
11. "PTV Citizens Committee to Spring White (Heat) Paper' at February Meeting in N.O.; Strong Bid for '2d Service,'" *Variety*, January 10, 1968.
12. "Public TV, Where Does It Go Next?" *Television Digest*, February 19, 1968, p. 2.
13. "Hoving Committee Gets Militant," p. 5.
14. Coe, "The National Citizens Committee For Broadcasting: What Is It?" p. 50.
15. "Stanton Calls Hoving on Accusation," *Broadcasting*, October 14, 1968, p. 9.
16. "Friends Scatter as Hoving Talks." *Broadcasting*, October 7, 1968, ad.
17. "Hoving Committee Broadens Scope To Take on Commercial B'casting; Dick Moore Joins As Gen'l Counsel," *Variety*, October 23, 1968.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Coe, "The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting: What Is It?" p. 52.
20. "Why walk into a trap?" Editorial, *Broadcasting*, November 4, 1968, p. 94.
21. "How Hoving Aims to Shake Things Up," *Broadcasting*, January 13, 1969, p. 38.
22. "What About the People?" Editorial, *Broadcasting*, January 13, 1969, p. 84.
23. "How Hoving Aims to Shake Things Up," p. 38.
24. *Ibid.*
25. "What About the People?" p. 84.
26. Coe, "The National Citizens Committee For Broadcasting: What Is It?" p. 54.
27. "Hoving Committee Runs Out of Money," *Broadcasting*, February 24, 1969, p. 9.
28. Coe, "The National Citizens Committee For Broadcasting: What Is It?" p. 54.
29. *Ibid.*
30. "How Hoving Aims to Shake Things Up," p. 39.
31. "NCCB Seeks Record of Program Material," *Broadcasting*, July 14, 1969, p. 49.
32. *bid.*
33. "Burch and Wells Draw More Fire from Uplift Units," *Variety*, October 29, 1969.
34. Robert Lewis Shayon, "Baiting the Giants," *Saturday Review*, November 28, 1970, p. 57.
35. "TV Code Battered On Hill," *Television Digest*, June 16, 1969, p. 3.
36. "Code Critic Joins Hoving Committee," *Television Digest*, December 7, 1970, p. 3.
37. "NCCB Turned Down on Pressure' Appeal," *Broadcasting*, December 27, 1971, p. 49.
38. "Making Airwaves," (More), January, 1975, p. 4.
39. Editorial, -access- (undated), p. 1.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
41. Nicholas Johnson, "I Dissent," *access*, January 13, 1975, p. 4.
42. "NCCB to scrutinize Ohio, Mich. Stations" *Broadcasting*, August 25, 1975, p. 66.